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# '[B]eyond that small circle all is foreign to us': Spatial and Social Cohesion in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*

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# 1. '[B]eyond that small circle all is foreign to us': Spatial and Social Cohesion in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*

[T]he province of the picturesque eye is to survey nature. ... It comprehends an extensive tract at each sweep. (William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape*)

Now roves the eye;  
And, posted on this speculative height,  
Exults in its command. (William Cowper, *The Task*)

Sarah Scott's novel, *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent*, published in 1762, is an account of a fictional utopian community established by a small group of women disillusioned with the world and men. '[C]onstituted on very different principles,' morally, economically, and socially, than those in the wider community (Scott 76), Millenium Hall and its estate provide a refuge for women who, through misfortune or birth, have experienced considerable hardship and poverty in the outside world. Gary Kelly, in his introduction to the most recent edition of *Millenium Hall*, states succinctly that the author has used three techniques to develop her novel: 'description, inset narratives, and plot' (27). The plot, simple in structure, presents a traveler (the narrator) and his companion, who, upon discovering Millenium Hall, request to hear the story of the community's establishment. Within that plot, Mrs. Mancel, one of the proprietors, provides the travelers with lengthy narratives of the lives of five of the initial inhabitants of the community. The description, contained almost entirely within the opening chapter of the novel, presents, as the title suggests, the 'country' — that is, the estate — 'adjacent' to Millenium Hall. Curiously, the novel's descriptive element — its careful delineation of the landscape's features and account of the narrator's animated response to the many pleasing views with which 'the eye is so charmed' (Scott 56) — has received remarkably little critical attention. Kelly, for instance, who states that Scott's description,

in a manner characteristic of most utopian writing, 'builds up a picture' of the idealized 'social and material economy of the place' ('Introduction' 28), neglects to mention the important aesthetic function of the landscape in the novel's descriptive chapter. Complex in its treatment, the landscape, on the one hand, illustrates elements of the picturesque aesthetic, which shaped conceptions of nature in the late eighteenth century: picturesque views, as Ann Bermingham explains, were 'prospect landscapes conceived in terms of a graduated, progressive, unfolding of space' (87). On the other hand, the spatial arrangement of Scott's landscape also demonstrates a significant departure from the aesthetic of the picturesque. Not simply 'unbounded and open' (Macey 169), as some critics have described it, the 'country adjacent' (lying near) to Millenium Hall consistently encloses human habitations and is characterized by circular spaces. That tension between open and enclosed spaces, I would argue, is a reflection of conflicting ideologies, for the narrator's worldly and capitalist experiences shape his conception of an open and expansive landscape, while the women's establishment of a small, protective and communally-oriented society has led them to design circular spaces that enclose the inhabitants of Millenium Hall and, in effect, resist the picturesque (male) gaze. However, while the women themselves claim to have established only a 'small circle,' beyond which 'much abler hands' will address the greater task of 'mend[ing] the world' (Scott 166), their community is nevertheless a site of considerable reforms, modeling, as Gary Kelly has argued, a thoroughly 'feminized political economy' ('Women's' 180) that blends capitalist practices with compassionate and philanthropic motives rooted in Anglican doctrines.

During the eighteenth century, as John Barrell explains, the landscape became a subject of increasing interest. 'It is sufficient to recall,' he states, 'that it was, of course, during the eighteenth century that the contemplation of landscape — in nature, or as represented in literature and the visual arts — became an important interest of the cultivated' (3). Contemplation of the landscape was determined, in large part, by the picturesque aesthetic, which provided the viewer with specific pictorial principles derived, primarily, from the seventeenth-century landscape paintings of Salvator Rosa, Nicolas Poussin, and, most importantly, Claude Lorraine (7). As David Watkin explains, 'Between 1730 and 1830 English poets, painters, travellers, gardeners, architects, connoisseurs and dilettanti, were united in their emphasis on the primacy of pictorial values. The Picturesque became the universal mode of vision for the educated classes' (vii). In the 1780s, William Gilpin introduced the term 'picturesque' for this mode of apprehending the landscape according to ideals embodied in seventeenth-century landscape painting. Beginning with his *Observations on the River Wye ... Relative Chiefly to Picturesque*

*Beauty* (1782), Gilpin taught the picturesque tourist, as Ann Bermingham explains, 'how to look at the natural landscape as an ordered, coherent pictorial whole.' He advocated an idealized conception of nature that entailed the 'imaginative organization of landscape scenery into a foreground, distance, and second distance' (86). This tripartite structure, Barrell points out, was characterized by 'a series of horizontal bands' that led the viewer's eye from the foreground into the far distance, where the eye was ultimately attracted to 'an area of light' set just below the horizon (7-8). Central to the picturesque prospect view was the onlooker's elevated, fixed viewpoint, which enabled the eye to organize the landscape and to apprehend it as a 'generalized ideal' (Watkin 75). '[T]he province of the picturesque eye,' William Gilpin writes in his *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape* (1794), 'is to survey nature; not to anatomize matter. ... It comprehends an extensive tract at each sweep' (26). Implicit in this elevated viewpoint, then, is the 'subjection' of the landscape to the viewer's controlling gaze (Barrell 24), for the viewer, from this detached distance, engages in a process of configuring the landscape according to a system of abstract rules.

Scott's narrator, 'A Gentleman on his Travels,' as the title page tells us, approaches and seeks to understand Millenium Hall with the aesthetic tools of a picturesque tourist. Attentive to the artful composition of the landscape, with its symmetry, variety of natural features, and recession into the distance, the narrator gives an account of three significant experiences of the landscape, each of which demonstrates an increasing ability to order the landscape according to picturesque principles. First, the novel opens with the narrator and his companion, Mr. Lamont, stranded on a road near Cornwall after their 'chaise br[ea]ks down,' as they head off in search of the nearest residence. In fact, they cannot see any evidence of human habitation; they are attracted, instead, by an inviting 'avenue of oaks' (56). Almost immediately, the narrator's attention turns away from his unfortunate 'accident ... several miles from a town' (56) and towards the pleasurable natural surroundings. Noting that his companion 'had hitherto been little accustomed to admire nature' (57), the narrator is quick to demonstrate his own cultivated taste and appreciation of the landscape as a source of aesthetic pleasure:

Mr. Lamont and I walked towards an avenue of oaks, which we observed at a small distance. The thick shade they afforded us, the fragrance wafted from the woodbines with which they were encircled was so delightful, and the beauty of the grounds so very attracting, that we strolled on, desirous of approaching the house to which this avenue led. It is a mile and a half in length, but the eye is so charmed with the remarkable verdure and neatness of the fields, with the beauty

of the flowers which are planted round them, and seem to mix with the quickset hedges, that time steals away insensibly. (56)

Within the sheltered 'avenue of oaks,' the narrator's eye does not see into the distance; however, the description of his movement away from the road and towards Millenium Hall provides a nearly comparable sense of a receding landscape. Marking each stage in their walk towards the hall, the narrator explains that he and his companion 'walked about half a mile,' 'continued,' 'walk[ed] on,' came 'within about a quarter of a mile of the house,' and finally 'approached' the 'ancient structure' (56-58). This first description of the landscape, then, contains elements of the picturesque aesthetic; however, while 'artfully planted,' the garden is also characterized by its 'infinite variety of nature,' which seems to elude a perfect composition (56-57).

That the narrator progresses to a more typically picturesque description of the landscape surrounding Millenium Hall is evident the following morning. He and Lamont, having arrived at the house and met its inhabitants, are warmly welcomed and invited to stay for the night while their 'chaise' is repaired. Rising 'very early' the next morning, the narrator goes 'directly into the garden' (64). Here, he encounters another remarkable natural landscape, which he similarly describes as characterized by pleasing 'variety' and 'artful' design:

I went first into the gayest flower garden I ever beheld. The rainbow exhibits not half the variety of tints, and they are so artfully mingled, and ranged to make such a harmony of colours, as taught me how much the most beautiful objects may be improved by a judicious disposition of them. (64) This second experience of the landscape is described in a more typically picturesque manner, for his eye 'then travels into the distance. 'Beyond these beds of flowers,' he explains, 'rises a shrubbery,' which, like the garden, is pleasingly 'collected.' 'Behind the shrubbery,' in turn, 'is a little wood, which affords a gloom' (64-65). The gloom, furthermore, is more 'agreeable,' in a typically picturesque way, because of 'its contrast with the dazzling beauty of that part of the garden that leads to it.' Moving still farther into the distance, his eye notices 'a little door' in the 'high pale which encloses this wood;' his 'curiosity' then induces him to 'pass through it' (65). More neatly composed than the first description, the narrator now presents a typically picturesque landscape, which recedes into the distance in three distinct stages.

A third description of the landscape demonstrates a further development in the narrator's ability to identify a purely picturesque view, for he now isolates a particularly expansive part of the estate that recedes right to the horizon. After breakfast the same day, he and Lamont take a walk with several of the women. Led, first, into 'a very fine wood ...

laid out with ... much taste' (68), the two men are then taken to 'an eminence,' where an exquisite structure, 'a temple dedicated to solitude,' stands (69). Through the windows of the temple, an expansive prospect of the surrounding countryside is visible. The narrator's description is entirely picturesque, now, for it outlines not only a series of receding stages in the landscape but also the attractiveness of an illuminated horizon where the eye ultimately rests:

[T]he prospect from it [is] noble and extensive, and the windows so placed, that one sees no house but at so considerable a distance. ... The most beautiful object in the view is a large river, in reality an arm of the sea, little more than a quarter of a mile distant from the building; about three miles beyond it lies the sea, on which the sun then shone, and made it dazzlingly bright. (69)

The narrator, here, following several previous experiences of the landscape, reaches a peak in his ability to describe a typically picturesque composition, for he achieves a heightened, rather detached, view of an unfolding landscape in which the eye travels with ease to the light at the horizon.

While this succession of three picturesque experiences of the landscape suggests that the narrator is able to achieve a widening and deepening understanding of Millenium Hall from a purely aesthetic point of view, Scott's treatment of the landscape and its spatial configurations are more complex than this apparent progression suggests, for her landscape just as insistently functions to enclose human figures and their habitations. In effect, the narrator's descriptions, while clearly picturesque in a number of respects, also demonstrate a striking departure from that aesthetic. Embedded within each account of the gradual unfolding of space is a contrasting enclosure, signifying, perhaps, the narrator's inability to completely and successfully impose on this community and its environment the pictorial values of a well-traveled picturesque tourist. Returning to the narrator's first encounter with the landscape as he approaches Millenium Hall, we see that the 'avenue of oaks' leading to the house 'encircle[s]' the travelers. The landscape, in other words, does not unfold before them, as it would in a picturesque composition, and, quite by surprise, the large old house, their destination, appears unexpectedly in front of them<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the narrator,

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1 As Gary Kelly has remarked, Scott's work includes an engraved frontispiece that illustrates the two men as they approach the Hall. The engraving depicts the men 'attempting to penetrate a protective screen of trees through which the hall can be

as he walks along the 'avenue of oaks,' is unable to compose or find order in the staggering variety of natural details on either side of the road:

[T]he nearer we came to the house, the greater we found the profusion of flowers which ornamented every field. ... Primroses, violets, lillies [sic] of the valley, and polyanthus enriched such shady spots. ... The mixture of perfumes which exhaled from this profusion composed the highest fragrance, and sometimes the different scents regaled the senses alternately, and filled us with reflections on the infinite variety of nature. (56-57)

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glimpsed' ('Women's' 176). Subverting conventional picturesque principles, the engraving, far from offering an expansive and comprehensive view of the surroundings, partially hides the travelers' destination, suggesting, in effect, its resistance to intrusion. Following Gilpin, Uvedal Price modified and more precisely codified Gilpin's definition of the term picturesque, in his *Essay in the Picturesque* in 1794, advocating, among other elements, the importance of sudden variation and accidents in nature rather than regularity (Watkin 75). That year, Richard Payne Knight's work, *The Landscape, a Didactic Poem in Three Books*, emphasizing some of Payne's principles, illustrates, in a passage that demonstrates a remarkable resemblance to the narrator's approach to Millenium Hall, the importance of the accidental:

Through the rough thicket or the flowery mead;  
Till bursting from some deep-imbowered shade,  
Some narrow valley, or some opening glade,  
Well mix'd and blended in the scene, you shew  
The stately mansion rising to the view. (qtd. in Watkin 79)

While Knight's passage demonstrates an emerging taste in the 1790s for a 'deep-imbowered shade,' within which the traveler encounters surprising and accidental views, William Gilpin's conception of a unified, carefully composed prospect view, as John Barrell explains (51ff), was the more influential aesthetic well into the late eighteenth century. It was the surprise of a breathtaking prospect, as these lines from James Thomson's *The Seasons* demonstrate, that characterized picturesque taste, and that Scott's landscape descriptions seem to subvert:

Meantime you gain the height, from whose fair brow  
The bursting prospect spreads immense around;  
And, snatched o'er hill and dale, and wood and lawn,  
And verdant filed, and darkening heath between,  
.....  
.....your eye excursive roams —  
Wide-stretching .....  
.....  
To where the broken landscape, by degrees  
Ascending, roughens into rigid hills  
O'er which the Cambrian mountains, like far clouds  
That skirt the blue horizon, dusky rise. ('Spring' 950-962)

Similarly, the narrator's second description of the landscape departs, as well, from the picturesque aesthetic in its attention to another enclosed space. While the narrator's eye travels to the 'wood' in the distance, it discovers there a neat 'row of ... cottages' that the wood had 'concealed' from his view (65). The enclosed space reflects the unique social cohesion of its inhabitants: twelve women of various ages, who have been rescued from virtual 'starv[ation]' by the women of Millenium Hall and given modest homes in this secluded setting. Forming a cohesive community, where they all agree 'to help one another' (66), the women engage in spinning, weaving, and knitting, the products of which are exchanged with 'the ladies' of Millenium Hall for 'meat, drink, and firing' (67). While the women's willingness to learn not 'to quarrel' and to 'love one another like sisters' (67) required effort and the acquisition of certain social skills, the seclusion of the little community, within a 'wood' 'enclose[d]' by a 'high pale,' undoubtedly contributed to that achievement of social cohesion and a relatively self-sufficient community.

The narrator's third description of the landscape reveals the most important of these enclosed spaces, all three of which are decisively inserted within the narrator's continuous descriptive accounts, which record the movement of his eye from one unfolding picturesque view to the next<sup>2</sup>. Significantly, the narrator's discovery of this enclosure immediately follows his exhilarating experience of the prospect view seen from the 'eminence.' As the group begins to walk back to the house, the narrator notices a 'pale,' the inside of which is lined with 'a hedge of yews, laurel, and other thick evergreens, ris[ing] to about seven or eight feet high,' and asks 'What was thus so carefully enclosed?' (70). Remarkably 'secluded from human view,' the 'refuge,' Lamont assumes, is designed for foreign animals (72, 71). He and the narrator quickly learn, however, that the enclosure is 'an asylum' for people — that is, for 'those poor creatures,' Mrs. Mancel explains, 'who are rendered miserable from some natural deficiency or redundancy' (72). Here, they find protection from the scorn and cruelty they experienced as public spectacles. Like the twelve women in the previous enclosure, the individuals in this one have been 'rescued out of their misery' and restored to health (74). Central to that recovery is the women's provision of this shelter within

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2 William Gilpin, in his *Three Essays*, exemplifies the active movement of the eye as it continually seeks new views: 'The first source of amusement to the picturesque traveller, is the *pursuit* of his object — the expectation of new scenes continually opening, and arising to his view. We suppose this country to have been unexplored. Under this circumstance the mind is kept constantly in agreeable suspense' (48).



the pale, which enables the disfigured inhabitants within it to remain hidden from strangers until they, by degrees, learn to accept visitors. This hidden, circular setting, then, again reflects the women's remarkable discernment, for they have utilized the restorative capacity of an enclosed space — indeed, inverted the picturesque detachment inherent in open space — to revitalize a marginal, powerless segment of human society.

In addition to these three examples of enclosed spaces that are set within, and are seemingly intended to disrupt, the narrator's picturesque views, it is perhaps no less significant to remark that the setting in which the inset narratives of the women's lives are told is an enclosed one as well. The narrator and Lamont, sitting down to hear the first narrative, concerning Miss Mancel and Mrs. Morgan, listen to the story in an enclosed place in the garden, where the flowers and trees 'surround' and protect them from the sun and the seclusion enables them to focus their 'attention' on the narrative:

We sat down in an arbour, whose shade invited us to seek there a defence against the sun, which was then in its meridian, and shone with uncommon heat. The woodbines, the roses, the jessamines, the pinks, and above all, the minionette with which it was surrounded, made the air one general perfume. ... A rivulet ran bubbling by the side of the arbour, whose gentle murmours soothed the mind into composure, and seemed to hush us to attention[.] (76-77)

In the subsequent chapters in the novel, the narrator reminds us that he and Lamont continue to hear the stories in relatively enclosed natural spaces, in the 'garden,' or 'on a green bank under an elm' in the 'park,' for example (122, 171). These enclosed settings parallel the intimate, privileged access the narrator is given to the women through their stories. Thus, the 'avenue of oaks,' with which the novel opens, introduces a significant spatial configuration which recurs throughout the descriptive chapter, and more subtly in the rest of the novel. Moreover, the cumulative effect of these enclosed images alerts us to the relationship between social conditions and spatial arrangements. The reader is invited, in a number of instances, to identify this relationship. The large room in Millenium Hall, for example, where the women gather during their leisure time to read, paint, and engage in other activities, is dominated by 'three windows on one side' and 'a large bow [window] at the upper end,' 'which looked into a garden' (59). Furthermore, the juxtaposition in the novel's title of two spaces — 'Millenium Hall' and the 'Country Adjacent' — draws attention to the rather permeable boundaries between exterior and interior spaces and between natural and social environments. Recent social theory which discusses the concept of land-

scape and space provides a helpful framework for interpreting this juxtaposition in Scott's novel, for theorists have examined spatial configurations in relation to social and economic forces. 'We are used to thinking of place as a geographical location, a point on a well-bounded map,' Sharon Zukin writes. However, place 'in a ... broader sense is a cultural artifact of social conflict and cohesion' (12). Referring more specifically to the eighteenth century, David Harvey argues that, in seeking 'a better society,' Enlightenment thinkers 'had to pay attention to a rational ordering of space ... as prerequisites to the construction of a society that would guarantee individual liberties and human welfare' (258). In Scott's novel, it is precisely the 'avenue of oaks' that 'encircle' the narrator as he approaches Millenium Hall, the discovery of enclosed communities within the Millenium Hall estate, and the protective 'arbour' in which he hears the stories of the founding members of the community that demand our attention. Mrs. Mancel, in response to Lamont's observation that the women's project offers limited reforms, claims that their ambitions are modest. Her reference to the 'circ[ular]' nature of their community emphasizes the women's desire for internal social cohesion rather than external change:

We do not set up for reformers, said Mrs. Mancel, we wish to regulate ourselves by the laws laid down to us, and as far as our influence can extend, endeavour to enforce them; beyond that small circle all is foreign to us; we have sufficient employment in improving ourselves; to mend the world requires much abler hands. (166)

J. David Macey, then, in arguing that the 'open and unbounded' landscape views surrounding Millenium Hall reflect the women's 'emancipation' from gendered hierarchy (169), perhaps overemphasizes the rather limited function of open spaces in Scott's novel.

In fact, the women's 'small circle,' in spite of Mrs. Mancel's claim that other 'much abler hands' are engaged in broader, more influential 'improv[ements]' in the world outside their own secluded community, represents a site of significant reforms. As Gary Kelly has argued, the women have established a level of 'individual self-control and agency' that effectively constitutes 'limited but intense kinds of moral and ethical agency in the sphere of domestic and local life and society.' While this small, circular sphere might 'seem limited,' he adds, it is 'highly important,' even 'central' to the nation's economic and social life:

For in a state lacking major national institutions of public welfare, social surveillance, and policing, the local sphere was a — perhaps *the* — major arena of social action. In an economy and society increasingly determined by capitalist methods

and relations, which the state was ill-equipped to guide or inhibit, intervention in the local sphere could be an important force for ameliorating the worst consequences of agrarian and incipient industrial capitalism. ('Women's' 170)

The women in Scott's novel, Kelly argues, establish a reformed feminist political economy, in which values of 'sterile capitalist accumulation' and 'courtly extravagance' are replaced by philanthropic and compassionate values rooted in Anglican doctrines of a good Christian life and salvation through grace (179-180). The Christian sphere, in other words, was the one in which upper- and middle-class women 'were licensed by social convention to intervene' — licensed, furthermore, to construct a 'distinctive ... female identity outside or beyond the distinctive constructions of women in court culture, the gentry property system, or defeminization through unmodified participation in men's intellectual or libertine courtly culture' (170). At Millenium Hall, the women, while practicing Christian benevolence, are also managing the economy of the estate, creating a 'rare balanced economy between matters material and spiritual' (Cruise 570), thereby modeling a reformed political economy for both the community and the nation.

In addition to the community's foundation in Anglican doctrines, the development of conversation circles during the eighteenth century undoubtedly underpinned Scott's conception of a 'small circle' as the basis on which to make improvements to the members of a community. Examining the role of the 'circle of conversation' in the Bluestocking salons, Deborah Heller argues that deliberate spatial organization was, indeed, a central component in the effort to achieve unity and equality among the participants:

The circle is a natural symbol for unity. It is doubly symbolic of unity when it takes the form of a "circle of conversation": spatially unified human beings engaged in a unifying process of communication. (70)

This spatial arrangement — the symmetry of a circle — became a solution, at least in part, to a social problem: the difficulty of enabling all the participants in a conversation in the public sphere to participate equally. This ideal, 'natural symbol for unity,' did have its limitations, as Heller concedes, for its symmetry — the 'rigidities imposed by the formal circle' — rather than accommodating the diversity of participants or encouraging active and equal participation, 'imposed' a structure that was too rigid and formal. For one thing, it required a single topic of conversation; for another, it was still unable to accommodate differences in status and power within the group. Nevertheless, it provided a starting point for achieving a new ideal of equality in public sphere

conversation. While Scott is dealing with a community on a larger scale, which inhabits an estate rather than a salon, the same principle of ideal spatial organization is demonstrated in the design of the landscape surrounding Millenium Hall. Like the Bluestocking salons, these circular enclosures have their limitations, for the diverse groups that inhabit Millenium Hall coexist but do not constitute a fully integrated community; nevertheless, the enclosed landscape spaces, like the small salon, provide sufficient protection and unity to the members of the community to enable them to engage in moral, social, and economic reforms that are potentially far-reaching in their effects.

Not surprisingly, then, the picturesque aesthetic, with its emphasis on the viewer's heightened detachment, ability to select and compose (in effect, control) what the eye sees, and ultimate intent to travel through the setting as a disengaged picturesque tourist, offers an ineffective mode of responding to and fully understanding the community of women inhabiting Millenium Hall. At the beginning of the novel, Scott's narrator approaches Millenium Hall from a purely aesthetic point of view, describing himself as a 'spectator' of the society he discovered by a 'fortunate ... accident' during his travels (53). However, the pictorial principles associated with the picturesque aesthetic do not adequately equip the narrator with the perceptive tools he needs to achieve a fuller and deeper understanding of the women, as well as the moral, social, and economic reforms in which they are engaged. For one thing, the women of Millenium Hall have deliberately chosen to seclude themselves from the type of detached, controlling male gaze associated with picturesque viewing. The tone of William Gilpin's language in the following passage from his *Three Essays*, with its use of the words 'pursuit,' 'hunt,' 'chase,' and 'attainment,' demonstrates how jarringly inappropriate the goals of picturesque travel and viewing are to a compassionate and perceptive understanding of the women's efforts to resist oppression:

The first source of amusement to the picturesque traveller, is the *pursuit* of his object — the expectation of scenes continually opening, and arising to his view. ... Every distant horizon promises something new; and with this pleasing expectation we follow nature through her walks. We pursue her from hill to dale; and hunt after those various beauties, with which she every where abounds. The pleasures of the chace are universal. ... After the pursuit we are gratified with the *attainment* of the object. (47-48)

As James Cruise points out, the narrator, whose prior entrepreneurial engagements were undoubtedly associated with a plantation in Jamaica, hardly 'seems qualified to document the activities of a community

whose principal claim is its resistance to subjugation' (556). Furthermore, the picturesque aesthetic, as an art that represents the landscape as 'artificially composed,' that teaches the viewer to carefully select, manipulate and distort natural features (Barrell 16), and that represents the 'triumph of illusion' (Watkin viii) seems oddly out-of-place in this setting where moral integrity and freedom from the world's vanity and deception are cherished. Finally, the picturesque aesthetic, clearly associated with both 'nature and ... art,' is, above all, linked to the experience of 'travelling' (Watkin vii), which gives the viewer a particular 'sense of space' that permits only a superficial knowledge of a place. The 'sort of knowledge' a traveler acquires of a place, Barrell argues, is merely that which can be gained while 'passing through' it: the traveler sees it 'never primarily as a place-in-itself, but always as mediated by its connection' to somewhere else (Barrell 89). Hardly effective for the purposes of Scott's narrator, who seeks to 'acquaint' himself with the 'amiable family' at Millenium Hall, whose 'modesty ... has induced them to conceal their virtues in retirement' (53), this detached, 'generalizing' (Barrell 93) perspective characteristic of the picturesque tourist ultimately gives way to the narrator's stationary, seated perspective in the enclosed arbour. At the end of the opening descriptive chapter, the narrator and his companion, having eagerly and thoroughly explored the estate's prospect views, retire to a 'shade[d]' 'arbour,' where, 'hush[ed] ... to attention,' they hear the narratives of the community's founders. By the end of the novel, and the completion of the narratives, the narrator experiences 'enlightenment,' evidence not only that Millenium Hall is an instrument of divine grace (Kelly, 'Women's' 179), but also that the narratives and the setting in which they are told, more than the initial picturesque views, enable the narrator to 'acquaint' himself fully with the remarkable society he has discovered.

When Gary Kelly identifies three distinct techniques used by the author — 'description, insert narratives, and plot' — he perhaps unwittingly invites the reader to see these techniques as distinct categories rather than overlapping — indeed interrelated — elements of the novel. Scott's novel, in fact, is less fragmented than this critical approach to reading it suggests, for the descriptive element, while contained primarily in the opening chapter, is integral to the book as a whole. Most important, the coexistence in the novel of elements of the picturesque aesthetic and images of enclosed, socially cohesive spaces creates a tension that reflects the jarring juxtaposition of two opposing ideologies. The narrator, 'A Gentleman on his Travels,' is a cultivated traveler. Having lived in the 'unwholesome climate of Jamaica' for too long and suffered physically from the heat, he has returned to England and been subsequently advised, in 'the pursuit of health,' to take a 'tour' before

retiring in the north (54-55). The narrator, it would appear, brings to Millenium Hall not only his privileged experience of travel but also that of social and economic liberty. Undoubtedly engaged in a capitalist venture in Jamaica, the island colony of Britain, where, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, sugar-producing plantations were owned and controlled by European entrepreneurs, the narrator returns to England able to enjoy the privilege of a leisurely and 'pleasing' tour, which will provide a 'variety of beautiful objects' (55). His interest in the 'unbounded' landscape perhaps reflects not only his picturesque taste in viewing the landscape but also his broader experience of individual achievement in social and economic terms. For the women, on the other hand, it is precisely the capitalist environment and society's inability to uphold the individual in times of social and economic need that motivates them largely to shun the outside world and establish a cohesive community based on principles of equality. That ideology is expressed in the spatial arrangement of their community: in the circular nature of the landscape 'adjacent' to Millenium Hall, which they have designed. The narrator's ideology is a foreign one, imported into the community, and his imposition of its aesthetic principles on the landscape requires effort. By the end of the novel, however, the narrator, having been enveloped by the 'thick shade' and the 'encircl[ing]' 'avenue of oaks' and having heard the women's stories, leaves that nearly circular utopian space and decides 'to go and do likewise.' Guided by the women's principles of reform, he proposes to engage all his 'thoughts ... in a scheme to imitate [their project] on a smaller scale' (249). The women at Millenium Hall, then, while they maintain a 'small circle,' beyond which, they claim, 'all is foreign' to them, necessarily benefit from accepting foreigners into that circle, who, while they ultimately leave, are nevertheless transformed by it and leave committed to perpetuating its influential work.

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